

Rising Chinese Influence in the Middle East: Implications for the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract

China's interest in the Middle East region is not new yet the execution of initiatives, is. Chinese involvement in undertaking the Resource diplomacy in the midst of Eastern region outlines the healthy relationship of producer and consumer governments in the political cum economical arena. The strength of Chinese influence is based on "Non-interference" policy. In addition, Beijing has been successful in consciously positioning itself as a mediator in the conflict and crises prone region of Middle East. Further, the paper tries to establish how much Chinese influence can push, for the solution of Israel-Palestine conflict.

(This research paper will analyze the potential impacts of an omnipotent China in the region. It will assess the various ways in which China's presence and involvement has changed the power dynamics of the region. Further, potentials and positive probabilities of greater Chinese involvement have been explored. Lastly, it will examine if the Israel-Palestine conflict could be affected by China's increased presence and influence in the Middle East)

Keywords: China, Chinese Policy, Non-military approach, Middle East, Economy, Israel, Palestine-Issue, Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)

Abbreviations

FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
BRI	-	Belt and Road Initiative



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KSA	-	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
IRI	-	Islamic Republic of Iran
ME	-	Middle East
MENA	-	Middle East and North Africa
GCC	-	Gulf Cooperation Council
PRC	-	People's Republic of China
CSIS	-	Center for Strategic and International Studies
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
CNPC	-	China National Petroleum Corporation
CNOOC	-	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CASCF	-	China Arab States Cooperation Forum
OPEC	-	Organization of Petrol Exporting Countries

Introduction

China has become more involved in the region, primarily through investments in infrastructure and energy projects. China's interactions and influence in the Middle East have grown significantly in the last two decades (Haroz, D, 2011). More than ten years ago, China's trade with the Middle East surpassed that of the United States and it is now a significant source of foreign direct investment (FDI) vis a vis technical cooperation (Cai, K. G, 1999). *China's trade with the region now far outnumbers than that of the United States.* In 2021, China's imports from the Middle East were \$130 billion versus \$34 billion for the US and China's exports to the region were \$129 billion versus \$48 billion for the US (Wickes, R., Adams, M., & Brown, N, 2021). The United States maintains a significant economic presence in the region through FDI stocks and the monetary aid programs. China is also holding diplomatic talks with regional powers with the goal of expanding its political and military presence. *By the sole initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has become a major driving force in regional economic activity* (Flint, C., & Zhu, C, 2019). China's influence in the Middle East has grown significantly under President Xi Jinping. It can be evidenced by analyzing various economic, political vis a vis diplomatic engagement within and astride the countries / associated regions. This

encompasses infrastructure investments, imports of nearly half of China's oil needs from the region and efforts to form strategic alliances with key countries to form deepen multilateralism. *As the United States reduces its presence in the region, China is increasing its diplomatic and economic engagement in the region.*

China has made significant inroads into the Middle East in recent years as it seeks to form strategic alliances with regional powers, secure its energy supplies and expand its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure projects. China's growing economic backed political influence in the region has the potential to shift the balance of power, de-stabilize traditional alliances and influence the resolution of long-standing conflicts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Israel-Palestine conflict is often termed as one of the world's most protracted and to many an intractable conflict with almost no possible end in sight (Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O., & Aall, P, 2009). Despite numerous international efforts to broker a peace agreement, the conflict continues to be marked by violence, political instability, homelessness and related humanitarian crises. The conflict has also served as a battleground for regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, all of which are vying for influence and jostling to support their respective proxies.

Significance of Study

Middle East is a strategically important region due to its significant energy reserves and its vital location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. China, as a global economic superpower is major consumer of energy with due interests in ensuring access to these resources by developing infrastructure and trade routes in the region. This growing influence is bound to have implications in altering the regional power dynamics, unhinge gigantic United States influence, potentially altering the balance of power and changing the overall dynamics of regional conflicts. With China's growing involvement in the region, there are concerns that its interests may not align with those of Israel, Palestine or the United States and that it may seek to leverage its influence to advance its own geopolitical goals at the expense of regional stability and peace efforts. Moreover, *China's increasing economic and*

strategic interests in the region may incentivize it to play a more active role in the resolution of the conflict, either as a mediator or as a stakeholder (Evron, Y, 2017). By answering these questions, this research paper will provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of the Middle East, tread the road leading towards Israel-Palestine conflict, attempt to shed light on the potential risks and opportunities of China's growing involvement in the region.

China in Middle East

China's engagement in the Middle East is strongly influenced by business interests as the region has outgrown to be a significant market for Chinese goods and a highly profitable one for construction contracts. Security of energy is a priority for China and the government's foreign relations are intended to help it grow economically. Energy security often defined as guarantee and protection of oil imports from other countries is a necessity for China's continuing economic expansion cum modernization. *The dynamics of the interaction are best understood in terms of producers attempt to control consumers from a position of resource dominance* (Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, K. J., Edvardsson, B., Sundström, E., & Andersson, P, 2010). China is increasing its influence in the Middle East through various means. Economically, China is increasing its investments and trade relations with countries in the region inclusive of importing a large amount of energy from Middle Eastern countries. In addition to economic ties, China is also increasing its diplomatic engagement with Middle Eastern countries through high-level visits and sustained dialogues (Leverett, F., & Bader, J, 2005). Furthermore, China has increased its involvement in conflict resolution efforts in the region, such as its involvement in the negotiations to end the Syrian conflict. A major surprise for the Muslim Ummah in particular, western world in general was to bring KSA and IRI (proponent countries of muslim sunni and shia sect) on a platform of mutual ties devoid of any religious frictions. The Belt and Road Initiative is also seen as a key tool for China to increase its influence in the region (Yu, H, 2017). While China's relationship with the Middle East is primarily focused on economic and

diplomatic ties, military cooperation has also occurred in the form of weapons transfer of technology vis a vis associated training schedules.

The **potential positive impacts of increased Chinese influence in the Middle East** could include:

- Increased flow of Chinese investment
- Enhanced trade partnerships in the region helping to diversify Middle Eastern economies beyond the oil sector and supporting local markets to developing infrastructure.
- China could play a role in promoting regional stability and security. Potentially, this could be exercised through diplomatic efforts and by providing non-interference support in all affairs.
- As the US influence in the region is perceived to be waning, China as an alternative could provide a balance of power.
- Potentially, Chinese growing influence could help to prevent regional conflicts.
- China and the Middle East have a long history of cultural cum economic exchange. Increased Chinese influence could help to foster cultural ties, mutual dependency and frequent exchanges in the region.
- In March 2023, practical manifestation of the positivity was to bring Saudia Arabia and Iran on one page to form “beyond economical nexus”. A master stroke that only China could have thought off and executed. This Sunni-Shia jointness was never perceived to be a reality by Eastern / Islamic countries and was bound to leave all (including the West) in awe.

However, few believe, **potential negative impacts of increased Chinese influence** could be:

- As China seeks to secure its access to Middle Eastern energy resources, it may increase competition with other countries and potentially drive-up resource prices.

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- Some commentators have raised concerns about China's human rights record and fear increased influence in the region could lead to worsening human rights condition.
- China seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East, as it may lead to tense the relations with other global powers including the United States, potentially leading to regional instability.
- Middle Eastern countries could become heavily reliant on Chinese investments and economic partnerships which could make them vulnerable to Chinese influence and economic pressure.

Countering Chinese influence altogether is mere over ambitiousness in a win-win regional scenario of Middle East where Chinese have effectively exercised economic policy backed by political pacts devoid of any military signatures Blackwill, R. D., & Harris, J. M. (2016). However, *some see it as an expansionist drive which needs / can be countered* in undermentioned ways:

- China's influence in the region be monitored. Understanding how the influence is manifesting and has the potential to disrupt regional stability be kept under close-watch.
- US can counter Chinese influence by raising its own diplomatic and economic drive. This may involve building a stronger alliance and a more potent trade relationship with Middle Eastern countries. This can further provide diplomatic support for mutual interests and concerns aimed at the goal of countering China's influence on these fronts.
- Chinese influencing actors may target available small number of persuadable voters or attempt to alter information in order to sway public opinion. Measures to mitigate the impact of such efforts could include increasing transparency around political processes, improving media literacy, education along-with an upsurge investment in cybersecurity domain and election integrity measures.
- Chinese defense exports, to some may be classified as an area of due concern and that Middle Eastern countries may be seeking to increase their military capabilities via Chinese arms sale under refurbished

deals. To counter this, other countries need to compete on defense exports or offer attractive alternatives.

It is crystal clear that China's increasing influence in the Middle East is primarily driven by economic and geopolitical interests rather than military interests. It is difficult to predict outrightly the specific impact of China's increasing influence in the Middle East on the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it is worth noting that China has been seeking to avoid taking sides, yet it has stated multiple times that support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and establishment of their independent Palestinian state should be brought on the cards. Above said, United States has often criticized the China's Middle East policy by accusing egoistic China of its energy pursuing interests (Taylor, I, 2009). Beijing of recent has sought a more proactive role in resolving conflicts in recent years, somewhat separate from its growing influence in the Middle East. Beijing realizing the sensitivity of Islamic Countries has backed up the mantra that Palestinian issue needs not only be addressed but resolved amicably. That said, China's growing economic, political and versatile ties in the region could create increased leverage, offer diplomatic opportunities to push for a peaceful resolution to the conflict with China's adaptable / more multi-lateral approach. Despite the above said reasoning, The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) could not desist itself from labelling Sino-Middle Eastern Policy as one shaped and influenced by energy needs only. However, it remains to be seen how China's growing influence in the Middle East will interact with the complex web of interests, alliances, and power dynamics that shape the Arab-Israeli conflict. *Overall, it would require careful diplomatic efforts and a balancing of interests from all sides to move towards a resolution of the conflict, rather than just China's increasing influence in the Middle East* (Indyk, M. S., Lieberthal, K. G., & O'Hanlon, M. E. (2012). Few propose, to return the Palestinian deprived land, US needs not to enact. Thus, a tricky postulate would be if China could alter the US policy towards the Jewish state? *Apparently, it has innumerable factors that need to be considered but the answer of altering Israel policy by Washington under Dragon's influence is a*

probable "Yes". Till 30th December 2022, 980 Bn US \$ is Chinese owed debt in US Economy, of which only 150 Bn US \$ is US subsidized assistance to Israel (Cooper, J. M, 1998). It is possible for China to influence US policy towards Israel using the monetary awards or rewards. China has long been a supporter of the Palestinian cause and has sided with the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel. In recent years, China has held enhanced involvement in the Middle East by investing in versatile projects ranging from infrastructure development to energy projects and entering into diplomatic talks with regional powers over issues of their vested interests. Resultantly, China's influence over US policy towards Israel could potentially be altered.

Research Gaps

While there have been significant discussions about China's growing influence in the ME region, there is a lack of empirical research on the actual extent and nature of Chinese influence in the region. Similarly, there has been some analysis of China's foreign policy in the MENA region, there is a need for more comprehensive analysis of China's goals and strategies in the region, particularly in relation to the Israel-Palestine issue. The failure to consider the implications of Chinese soft power in the region such as its influence on public opinion and its potential to shape the dynamics of the conflict is oft neglected one. While China has expressed support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine issue, there is a lack of research on China's actual role in conflict resolution efforts. This includes the extent to which China is actively engaged in mediating the conflict and the impact of its involvement on the prospects for a resolution. The lack of research on the role of Russia in the Middle East and its potentials to facilitate or impede Chinese influence in the region. There is a need for more research on the impact of China's growing influence on regional power dynamics, particularly in relation to the Israel-Palestine issue. This includes the potential implications for regional alliances, rivalries, power struggles and the impact of these dynamics on the prospects for a resolution to the conflict. Failure to examine and evaluate the potential long-term effects of China's presence in the Middle East on regional and international stability is yet another experienced research gap. The region is

expected to disintegrate and rebuild carving out formation of blocks and trade partnerships or likewise associations. While there has been some discussion of China's human rights record in the context of its growing influence in the MENA region, there is a need for more research on the impact of China's policies on human rights, particularly in relation to the Israel-Palestine issue.

Research Questions

- What are the key drivers of China's growing influence in the Middle East, and how does it impact the regional balance of power?
- What are the implications of China's rising influence in the Middle East for the Israel-Palestine conflict and how it might affect the prospects of a lasting peace agreement?
- How are regional powers such as IRI, KSA and Turkey are responding to China's growing influence in the region. What are the potential consequences for regional stability and security?

Hypothesis

The increasing Chinese influence in the Middle East has significant implications for China's economic and political interest in the region. This may lead to a shift in the balance of power and alter the dynamics of regional politics, potentially impacting the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework considered applicable for this research paper has been Realism theoretical perspective. In the context of International Relations, *Theory of Realism emerged in the mid-20th century as a distinct theoretical framework*. An influential Realist Scholar Hans Morgenthau, in his book "Politics Among Nations" published in year 1948 presented a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the International System from a realist perspective. Morgenthau argued that *"Pursuit of power and security is the primary driver of state behavior and that states are rational actors seeking to maximize their interests in a context of global competition"* (Schweller, R. L., & Pu, X. 2011). To-date, this theory suggests that *"State is the primary actor in International Relations and that they act to maximize their power*

and security in the International System". Theory of Realism when applied to the Middle East, depicts that states are often engaged in a balance of power game, seeking alliances and building military capabilities to secure their interests. The rise of Chinese influence in the Middle East can be seen as a potential game-changer, altering the balance of power and creating new alliances which could have implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Methodology

This research paper will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the implications of China's growing influence in the Middle East. The research methodology is based on the following steps: Conduct a comprehensive literature review of academic and non-academic sources to gather relevant information and data on China's rising influence in the Middle East. This will encompass its economic, political and cultural ties with the region. The paper will also cover the Israel-Palestine conflict and previous attempts at resolving the conflict. Collect data on China's economic backed political activities in the Middle East including trade, enhanced investment figures, diplomatic initiatives and cultural exchanges. This data can be gathered through official government sources, academic research and media reports. Conduct case studies of China's involvement in key Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel to analyze the specific nature of China's relationship with each country and its potential impact on the Israel-Palestine conflict. This can involve analyzing the economic cum political ties between China and these countries as well as examining any cultural or social exchanges. Interviews with experts, policymakers and scholars with expertise on China's involvement in the Middle East with due focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict will give out an expert analysis. These interviews will further provide insights and perspectives on the potential implications of China's growing influence in the region. Analyze the data collected through literature review, case studies and interviews using appropriate methods such as statistical analysis, content analysis and thematic analysis. The analysis should focus on identifying patterns, trends and relationships between China's involvement in the Middle East and the Israel-

Palestine conflict. All research will be conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, including obtaining and sorting of information received. Emotional influences have been barred to alter the reality of content. Consent and confidentiality of the interviewees will be ensured. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn from the analysis including the potential implications of China's growing influence in the Middle East for the Israel-Palestine conflict. The conclusions will be based on the findings from the data analysis and should be supported by evidence from the literature review and case studies.

Limitations

Few of the limitations that have the potential to hinder the research work are as under:

- **Limited Data Availability:** Data availability and reliability may be a significant limitation especially when analyzing China's activities in the Middle East. Some information of related events may not be publicly available or may be subject to censorship. Additionally, data on the Israel-Palestine conflict may also be limited or disputed, making it challenging to draw definitive conclusions.
- **Language Barrier:** Some information may be available only in languages other than English which may limit the scope of the research and lead to a potential language barrier.
- **Political Sensitivities:** The study may face political sensitivities especially when analyzing the Israel-Palestine conflict which is a highly contentious and sensitive issue. This may lead to limitations in the scope of the research or hinder access to data and information.
- **Bias:** There may be potential bias in the data sources used and the research may not be entirely objective. Additionally, the researcher's own biases may influence the interpretation of the findings.
- **Conflicting Interests:** The research may face conflicting interests between China and the countries having affinity with those involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This could potentially limit the availability of data or lead to biased interpretations of the findings.

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- **Limited Participant Diversity:** The research may have limited participant diversity with a focus on expert and policymakers from specific countries or regions. This could potentially limit the range of perspective and interpretation of the findings.

Study Design

SECTION – I: How China is influencing Middle East

China sees the Middle East as a key region for investment and trade. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to boost economic connectivity between China and the Middle East by building infrastructure, including ports, railways, and pipelines. *China is also the world's largest oil importer and the Middle East is a major supplier of oil and gas* (Leverett, F., & Bader, J, 2005). China's growing economy and energy needs have led to increasing investment in the region to secure its energy supplies.

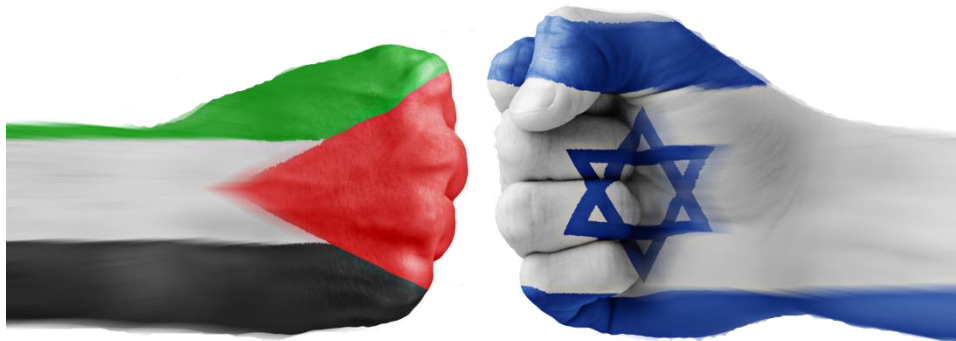


China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to strengthen infrastructure and connectivity across Asia, Europe and Africa has led to increased investment and engagement with Middle Eastern countries. Similarly, from the Chinese context, Middle East is a key strategic region and seeks to expand its influence there to counterbalance the United States or other Western powers. China has also increased its involvement in regional conflicts, such as in Syria, where it has supported the government of President Bashar al-Assad. China's growing economic needs has allowed it to expand its influence beyond its borders and the Middle East represents an important region in China's efforts to project its global influence. China has sought to increase its diplomatic engagement with Middle Eastern countries via high-level visits and multilateral forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China's emphasis on economic development and trade has led to increased investment and business ties with Middle Eastern countries which in turn has helped to strengthen China's influence in the region. *China has also sought to increase its soft power in the Middle East by promoting*

cultural and educational exchanges and increasing its media presence in the region (Hall, I., & Smith, F, 2013).

SECTION – II: Implications of Chinese Influence in Middle East and Israel-Palestine Issue?

China's rising influence in the Middle East has had significant implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict. Beijing has expressed support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict and its growing influence in the Middle East could potentially enable it to play a more active role in mediating the conflict. However, China's lack of historical involvement in the conflict and its perceived bias towards the Palestinian side could limit its effectiveness as a mediator. China's economic investments in the region, including the Belt and Road Initiative, could potentially provide incentives for regional actors to pursue peace and stability, including in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, economic dependency on China could also limit the ability of regional actors to pursue independent foreign policies and could exacerbate existing tensions and rivalries.



China's growing strategic alliances with regional powers including Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey could potentially impact the dynamics of the conflict and the prospects for a resolution (Kamrava, M, 2018). China's relationship with Iran could potentially influence Iran's stance on the conflict while its relationship with Turkey could potentially impact Turkey's relationship with Israel. China's treatment of its Muslim minority populations has raised concerns among many MENA countries particularly those with significant Muslim populations. This could limit China's

credibility as a mediator in the conflict and could exacerbate existing tensions amongst China and MENA countries on human rights issues. China's increasing influence in the Middle East could potentially shift the international dynamics surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict which could potentially lead to new alliances and greater pressure on Israel to engage in peace negotiations. President Xi Jinping in his speech on 21st January 2016, was noted to have delivered following words for the early resolution of Israel -Palestinian Issue at Arab League Headquarters. *"The unrest in the Middle East roots in the development and the eventual resolutions also"*. (Friedman, B. (2014). No one could expect KSA and Iran establishing a nexus under the Beijing policy. No one knows what the future may hold, China's economic engagement in the region could potentially lead to greater economic cooperation amongst Israel, Palestine and other Middle Eastern countries. This economic dependency could potentially lead to increased stability and reduced regional tensions. China's growing influence in the Middle East could potentially impact U.S. policy towards the region and the Israel-Palestine conflict, potentially leading to increased competition between the United States and China in the region.

China's growing influence in the region could potentially impact Palestinian diplomacy, potentially leading to a shift in Palestinian priorities or a new approach to peace negotiations but it has a flip side also. The other side of the coin states that China's growing influence in the Middle East has the potential and the requisite drive to disturb the regional stability. To few, this could potentially lead to increased tensions or give rise to new conflicts. The general perception is, China's engagement with Arab states could potentially impact Israel's relations with these states could potentially lead to new opportunities for dialogue and cooperation. This if analyzed well, could have implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict and its resolution. Without being over enthusiastic, *China's growing economic presence in the region could potentially lead to increased investment in Palestine, potentially leading to economic growth and stability.* This could result in positive implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict and its speedy resolution. China's growing

military presence in the region could potentially hamper Israeli arms sales and military technology transfers, potentially affecting the existent balance of power, reducing the US vis a vis US-driven Israeli influence in the region.

SECTION – III: China uprooted US influence or filled in Power

Vacuum?

Uprooting US influence is a difficult and naive motion to address albeit an interesting one too. Whether China uprooted U.S. influence in the Middle East or took advantage of a power vacuum is a complex and probably a debatable pretext. However, this question is more of a matter of an interpretation than derivatives. During the period of research, the paper concludes that *the answer of this sacred question in entirety is a misperception*. However, in piecemeal analysis, it will depend on the specific context and time period of consideration. Much literature is available to suggest that China's increasing engagement with the Middle East has come at the expense of U.S. influence in the region. China has been expanding its economic and political ties with Middle Eastern countries one by one, while the United States from the outset had been reducing its military presence and scaling back its diplomatic efforts. This had created an opening for China to step in and fill the void left by the United States, potentially altering the balance of power in the region. Which was timely realized and taken advantage of, for good. *On the other hand, if we see the turned table scenario, it could be argued that China's rising influence in the Middle East is less about displacing U.S. influence and more about taking advantage of a power vacuum created by a range of factors, including political instability, economic crises, deprivation drives and regional conflicts* (Pehrson, C. J, 2006). The Middle East as a region has been facing a range of challenges in recent years. Many countries in the region have been looking to diversify their partnerships and seek new sources of economic / political support. In this context, China's expanding role in the region could be seen as a response to these broader geopolitical trends rather than a deliberate effort to displace U.S. influence.

SECTION – IV: Enhanced Chinese Signatures in Middle East?

China's growing economic and political presence can give greater leverage to the region despite existence of multifarious instability-struck states if made to involve in any peace negotiations. This could potentially allow China to push for more favourable outcomes for its own interests, which may or may not align with the multifaceted foreign policy of other key players jostling for effect in the region. They could range from United States, Israel or various other Arab states. On the other hand, China's involvement in the region could also create new opportunities for cooperation between different actors over past frictions. For example, China has already played a role in mediating between different factions in Syria and could potentially do the same in other conflict zones. This could help build trust and create more momentum towards a lasting peace agreement. However, if China's involvement in the region is seen as overly aggressive or one-sided, it could potentially exacerbate tensions and lead to further destabilization (Kang, D. C. O, 2007). This could make it more difficult to reach a lasting peace agreement, particularly if different actors in the region feel that China is not acting in good faith or is trying to tilt the balance of power in its favor. Which during the course of research seemed more of an assumption or supposition devoid of ground realities.

SECTION – V: Dragon's Arrival and Middle Eastern Powers

In last two to three decades, China has trotted over the developmental stage of forming strategic partnerships with many of the Middle Eastern states. This includes Egypt (1999), Algeria (2004), Turkey (2010), UAE (2012), Qatar (2014), Jordan (2015), Iraq (2015), Iran (2016), Morocco (2016), Saudi Arabia (2016), Oman (2018), and Kuwait (2018), (Hoh, A, 2019). *Further, to increase the economic activity, Beijing started negotiating free trade agreements under the ambit of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with due emphasis on Israel and Palestine.* However, harmonious response of regional powers of Middle East viz Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey adds color to the China's growing influence in the region. A brief premise of the regional powers hand in glove approach is indicative of the harmonious and positive

response from the regional powers towards the Sino-economic cum political measures:

- **Iran:** Iran has sought to deepen its ties with China viewing China as a potential counterbalance to Western powers. Iran has signed major energy / infrastructure deals with China and has sought to increase trade focusing upon tying investment deals. However, Iran earlier viewed China warily and had been careful to maintain a balance between its relations with China and other major powers such as Russia.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia has also sought to deepen its economic ties with China viewing China as an important market for its oil exports. However, until recently, Saudi Arabia had also been cautious than Iran in its approach to engage China. Earlier, it had not sought to develop the same level of political or strategic ties. That said, the tables have turned dramatically when China succeeded in bringing Saudi Arab and Iran (both Islamic lead countries of Sunni and Shia sects) on one page resulting in unison of Muslim Ummah as a whole and avoiding back door support of their factions while the “future Arab Spring” is grilled on flames.
- **Turkey:** Turkey has been more vocal in its concerns about China's growing influence in the region particularly in relation to China's treatment of its Muslim minority populations. Turkey has criticized China's internment, torture, persecution and ill treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province. Not only Turkey has voiced against it but it has sought to support Uyghur communities in Turkey and elsewhere also. However, despite all Turkey has also deepened economic ties with China and has signed major infrastructure and investment deals.
- **Overall Canvas:** Considering the overall context / biasedness of regional powers in the Middle East, China's growing influence in the region engulfing varying strategic priorities and interests has been of mutual interest.

SECTION – VI: Evaluating China’s Power Play & Regional Uplift

The paper unfolds that healthy trade relations are being established on mutual benefit basis, potential consequences for regional stability and security can be termed in the waxing phase with joint dividends at both ends. China’s economic and political activity cannot and should not be termed as “pushing out” of the United States from the region. However, owing to a US alternative, states in the Middle East can be witnessed to enhance their relations with China to demonstrate that they have other and better trade tariffs / economical options. During the course of research, China was found desirous to play a more significant security role in the region and the urge of building military bases all around the globe remained unfounded. Security interactions have also involved multi-lateral economical activities. *A desire to mimic, off-balance, alter or replace the “Security Role” the US has played for decades has remained un-evidential.* If still potential consequences in the region are to be predicted, they can be numerous. The foremost would-be China's increased involvement in the region could potentially increase geopolitical tensions with other major powers, particularly the United States in focus. This could exacerbate existing conflicts and rivalries in the region which could in worst scenario lead to greater instability and insecurity. MENA countries that become overly dependent on China for economic investments and trade could potentially become vulnerable to economic coercion or manipulation by China. This could weaken their ability to pursue independent foreign policies, could increase their susceptibility to outside pressure and could limit their answer to China’s demand in only “Yes”. China's involvement in regional conflicts, particularly as it has been in Syria, could potentially impact regional security dynamics (Kausch, K, 2015). This could lead to further destabilization and violence, potentially worsen existing conflicts and rivalries. China's treatment of its Muslim minority populations has raised concerns among many MENA countries, particularly those with significant Muslim populations. China's growing influence in the region could potentially aggravate these concerns and lead to greater tensions between China or MENA countries on human right issues. China's growing

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influence in the Middle East has the potential and necessary drive to alter regional power dynamics and challenge the influence of traditional regional players such as the United States and Russian Federation. This could lead to increased competition and tension in the region, potentially affecting the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, the scenario build-up, the on-ground situation and political scenario are all indicative of positivity in this realm. China's investments and trade relations with Middle Eastern countries are bound to have implication for the region's economic ties with Israel and Palestine. China's engagement could potentially undermine the economic dependence of Israel and Palestine on other countries and drift the balance of economic cum political strive of jostling up in power to stand out in the region. China's increasing role in the Middle East could provide opportunities for it to play a role in peace efforts between Israel and Palestine (Evron, Y, 2017). China could also leverage its economic and political influence to promote peace negotiations and facilitate dialogue between the conflicting parties. China's growing involvement in the Middle East could in a way lead to the alignment of regional powers with China's geopolitical interests, potentially impacting the stance of Middle Eastern countries on the Israel-Palestine conflict. *Dragon's growing influence in the Middle East could potentially impact the international diplomacy around the Israel-Palestine conflict.* China could use its influence to promote its own interests, leading to a divergence from the established diplomatic norms. China's engagement in the Middle East could lead to increased cultural exchange and understanding between China and Middle Eastern countries, eventually leading to new perspectives of partnership and on the Israel-Palestine conflict resolution also. China's investments in the region could potentially lead to increased competition for resources, such as energy, water, and land. This could exacerbate tensions in the region and have implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict.

China's growing influence in the Middle East could potentially impact U.S. policy towards the region and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The United States may feel the need to compete with China's influence and could potentially

adjust its policies towards Israel and Palestine accordingly (Gelb, L. H. 2009). China's engagement in the Middle East could potentially impact regional alliances and cooperation, potentially leading to new alliances and formation of regional or sub-regional economy centric blocs. This could have implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict and its resolution. China's increasing military presence in the region could potentially impact arms sales and military technology transfers in the region, potentially affecting the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Conclusion

The rise of Chinese influence in the Middle East has significant implications for the Middle Eastern region. China's growing economic and diplomatic presence in the region has led to a shift in the balance of power and this has considerably impacted the dynamics of the conflict. China's support for Palestine has increased over the years, with the country publicly backing Palestine's right to statehood and urging a peaceful resolution to the conflict. At the same time, China's strong economic ties with Israel have enabled it to play a more active role in the peace process. *China has used its leverage to encourage both sides to come to the negotiating table and has even proposed its own peace plan, which includes the creation of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.* While China's involvement in the peace process has been welcomed by some, others are concerned about the implications of China's growing influence in the region. Israel could be worried about the impact this could have on its relationship with the United States, which remains its most important ally. Overall, the rise of Chinese influence in the Middle East is a complex issue with significant implications for the Israel-Palestine conflict. While it has the potential to help bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict, it also raises questions about the role of outside powers in the region and their impact on the balance of power. It remains to be seen how this will play out in the years to come, but one thing is clear: the situation in the Middle East is rapidly evolving and all stakeholders will need to be proactive in finding a solution that works for everyone involved.

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